

Second Place - \$750 Scholarship
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Senior

Dinner Time

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

"I Have a Dream" speech, August 28, 1963

Martin Luther King Jr. was an incredible man. When he spoke, people listened. Where he went, people followed. He forever changed America by his brilliant speeches and brave acts. However, what I am most thankful for are not his freedom marches or his ability to cause change without violence. I am thankful for Martin Luther King because he envisioned an America where a family like mine can exist.

My family is a mess. Let me rephrase that, we are a collage. We're bits and pieces from everywhere. We're grafted from other family trees, sowed with different political ideas, and staked together by the belief that despite our different races, we are one.

When King gave his famous "I have a Dream" speech he saw a new America where African Americans could vote and eat wherever they chose to. He also laid the foundation for blended families like mine to exist. Three are adopted. Three are biological. King enabled the birth of a new America that is not limited by the external attributes of her people. He not only encouraged America to open her eyes to her eclectically originated children, he enabled her to destroy the belief that the way things were, were the way things always had to be. No longer was it white with white, Asian with Asian, black with black. He paved the way for many a loud dinner time at my house. My table of brotherhood is descended from Israel, Japan, Puerto Rico, Haiti, Italy, Germany and a Texas Confederate, all strung together under a banner of stars and stripes, and love.

Martin Luther King Jr. smashed the bricks that led to the destruction of thousands of years of carefully kept prejudices. He took down the painting that represented life as they knew it and painted the way for life as I know it.

Yes, my family is loud and looks curious sitting in the church pew, but we fit together. Not all people see our family's diversity as a beautiful thing. My most ardent wish is that time will heal the centuries of prejudice so that there are more families like mine.

To answer your question "How is Martin Luther King Jr. opening eyes to diversity?" I would invite you to dinner. My mom is ranting about the cost of one sister's new weave, my other sister and I are joking about boys, the other teens are using so many SAT words it makes my head hurt, and the youngest hides in his napkin the vegetables prepared by his Japanese grandmother. Black, White, and Brown. This is the new vision of America and this is my life.

Thank you, thank you, dear Martin Luther King, Jr. for dinner time.